

# ***The 60 Plus Association***

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## **Testimony of James L. Martin before the House Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources**

**Energy Supply and the American Consumer**  
**1324 Longworth House Office Building, February 12, 2004, 10:00a.m.**

I'm Jim Martin, President of the 60 Plus Association, an 11-year-old advocacy group. 60 Plus calls on some 4.5 million seniors nationally for support.

60 Plus commends you for convening this important hearing focusing on the lack of adequate energy supplies and the resulting high energy costs. 60 Plus respects the law of supply and demand. We know that if energy supplies are tight, seniors pay more to heat and cool their homes. We recognize that it's been a harsh winter, and that folks are paying much more for energy.

I also want to congratulate the Speaker for establishing the *Task Force on Affordable Natural Gas Supply*. Implementing the Task Force's recent recommendations will go a long way toward improving access to this vital fuel.

60 Plus strongly supports the current Energy Bill. If Congress wants to help cut the cost of energy, it should swiftly enact this measure. I'm preaching to the choir, but this bill is presently hung up in the "world's so-called greatest deliberative body," the U.S. Senate. It's hard to believe that such an important bill could be on the ropes, but at the moment it is.

In our brief time together today, I wish to cite one example of why enacting the Energy Bill is so vital for seniors. It authorizes \$3.4 billion for the *Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program*. At the moment, LIHEAP is funded at \$1.8 billion. This program

helps qualified Americans -- many who are seniors on fixed incomes -- heat and cool their homes. While natural gas prices are up 70%, LIHEAP funding is actually down. The Energy Bill changes this. It authorizes more for this important program. Moving this bill signals seniors that Washington understands their situation, and is doing something about it. Enacting the Energy Bill is the first step. The next step is to fully-fund LIHEAP.

60 Plus recently communicated exactly this view to the Office of Management and Budget, the Appropriations Committee Chairs, Health and Human Services Secretary Thompson and Federal Reserve Chair Alan Greenspan -- who has taken a personal interest in gas price spikes. Our letter is attached.

The Census Bureau reports that last year the number of elderly impoverished Americans increased to 3.6 million. When it comes to heating and cooling, seniors have unique challenges. It's hard for some to carry wood to the fireplace. Others have sealed windows, or live in areas where they're reluctant to open them if they can. They must turn to their thermostats, whether it's hot or cold. One elderly Philadelphian died from exposure this winter in his home. He had a LIHEAP application, but was too infirm to sign it. As cold as this winter is, more Americans actually succumb to summer heat than all other weather phenomena combined.

In summary, 60 Plus supports the recommendations of the Task Force on Affordable Natural Gas, and rapid passage of the Energy Bill. Both are important to America's seniors.

Let me add a few general remarks.

1. We need all forms of domestic energy that we can produce and this includes coal, natural gas, nuclear and renewables such as wind and solar.
2. Speaking of coal, it's King Coal where I was born. While I've been active in this town for more than 40 years, coming here as a newspaper reporter, a pad and pencil scribe covering Congress way back in 1962 when John F. Kennedy was in the White House, I'm also proud of my roots, that I'm a native of the mountains of eastern Kentucky. I'm very proud to point out that I'm the son of a coal miner. I vividly remember the sight and smell of a carbide light on my dad's helmet as he left many mornings before dawn to dig coal.

More than half of our electricity comes from coal and we've come a long, long way from the days of strip mining and abandoned sites that were not only eyesores but environmental disasters to where sound technology allows for energy exploration with minimal risk now to the ecology.

I was struck by the fact that the President's energy recommendations, some 120 overall, that more than 40 dealt specifically with the environment.

3. Any limits to domestic exploration (whether offshore, drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, etc) at a time when international supplies are so uncertain is not good for this country. We must wean ourselves from our dependence on foreign oil supplies.
4. Back in 1973 during the Arab oil embargo, then Minority Leader John J. Rhodes (R-AZ) appointed Congressman Roger Zion of Indiana, Chairman of the House Republican Task Force on Energy. Roger is Chairman of the 60 Plus Association at a hale and hearty 82 years young. So we're keenly aware of this problem of dependence on foreign sources of energy.
5. Back in his Presidency, Jimmy Carter once remarked that with oil imports at 37%, he stipulated that his goal was to see that this percentage did not rise another point. Well, 25 years later, it's more than 57% and still rising. When does it stop?
6. Isn't it time to reassess our ANWR policy and decide to drill? While 60 Plus once considered this an economic issue, 60 Plus, with well over 80% of our supporters veterans of military service, now considers this a national security issue following 9/11 and the war we're engaged in.

We need to develop ANWR as soon as possible especially in view of recent events in Iraq and the Middle East and our increasing use of foreign imports of oil—in some cases from unstable countries which might cut off future supplies, or have wells sabotaged or fix prices which would hurt American business, economic growth and consumers.

I would like to acknowledge several sources that I rely on from time to time on energy issues: Jack Gerard, head of the National Mining Association, a friend of more than 30 years; Bill Fay, President of the Truck Stop Owners Association; Ed Rissing, an old friend of mine and of Roger Zion's from Indiana; Art Wiese, former Vice President of the American Petroleum Institute and current Vice President of the Entergy Corporation; General Richard Lawson, former head of the National Mining Association; Tom Altmeyer of the Arch Coal Company and Paul Cicio, Executive Director of the Industrial Energy Consumers of America.

I see my time is up. I thank you for yours.

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60 Plus is a 10-year-old nonpartisan group with a less government, less taxes approach to seniors' issues. 60 Plus has become one of the fastest growing seniors groups in the country, doubling then tripling its support in the past year. 60 Plus can now call on support from nearly 4.5 million citizen lobbyists to print and mail millions of letters and petitions. 60 Plus publishes a newsletter, SENIOR VOICE, and a SCORECARD, bestowing a GUARDIAN OF SENIORS' RIGHTS award on lawmakers in both parties who vote "pro-senior." 60 Plus has been called "an increasingly influential lobbying group for the elderly..."